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Viewing cable 06PORTAUPRINCE1661, PREVAL HOME ALONE

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

#06PORTAUPRINCE1661.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06PORTAUPRINCE1661	2006-09-07 17:40	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Port Au Prince

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.haiti-liberte.com/archives/volume5-1/Campagne%20des%20E.U..asp>

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 001661

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR
DRL
S/CRS

SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
TREASURY FOR JEFFREY LEVINE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/17/2011
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: PREVAL HOME ALONE

REF: PAUP 1597

Classified By: Classified by Charge D'Affaires Thomas T. Tighe for reasons 1.4(d).

¶1. Summary. Over four months into Preval's presidency, he has yet to form a staff allowing him to carry through policy initiatives. Preval confidante and advisor Robert Manuel serves as chief counselor. Gabriel Verret, who appears to have grown in influence advises Preval on economic matters. Preval has no chief of staff and no spokesperson. His administrative staff consists of his sister, a former minister, and an intimate friend. He recently appointed his close advisor Fritz Longchamp to the newly created position of secretary general of the presidency to coordinate project assistance among international donors. Preval contacted former presidential candidate Marc Bazin to help form a kitchen cabinet, though it is questionable if Preval could effectively utilize Bazin without further bolstering his personal staff. Bazin notes that Preval will have to overcome his penchant for informality in order to have any hope of improving his government's efficiency. End Summary.

All the President's Men and Women

¶2. (C) With Preval having completed his fourth month in office, he is effectively operating with a staff of two advisors and three administrators, with no chief of staff. Former campaign manager and confidante Robert Manuel continues to function as Preval's right hand man and proxy. Manuel is at the center of Preval's efforts to deal with the security, though his title and his precise responsibilities remain undefined. Manuel's Guatemalan wife and two young children continue to reside in Guatemala, necessitating Manuel's frequent absence from Haiti and complicating further definition of his formal role. (Note Manuel has been on vacation in Central America for the past two weeks. He had earlier complained to the Ambassador that Preval had called him back from the airport and forced him to cancel an earlier trip. End Note.)

¶3. (C) Preval's other counselor, Gabriel Verret, a former USAID employee, continues to serve as Preval's advisor on economic matters and appears to have gained increasing authority and influence with Preval since joining him during the transitions period. Verret has been at the center of formulating Haiti's response to the Venezuela's PetroCaribe initiative and most recently worked closely with the ministries of finance and planning to draft the GoH budget and forward it to parliament (septel). Varret told Econoff that he relies on a U.S. trained financial specialist in the ministry of planning for accounting and budget expertise; he otherwise operates with no other staff support of his own.

¶4. (C) For administrative support, Preval appointed his sister, Jean-Marie Calvin, as his personal secretary. Preval's presumed former and perhaps current mistress Elizabeth Delatour (and sister in-law of Minister of Tourism Patrick Delatour, through her deceased husband). Former Minister for Tourism Martine Duverson (in the first Aristide administration), reportedly serves as Preval's scheduler and chief administrator, though Embassy staff note that Mrs. Calvin is a more reliable point of contact. According to visitors to the palace, all three are at the palace only intermittently. Duverson reportedly still works out of the government-provided presidential residence Ashton house, rather than the palace. Embassy staff normally contact Mrs.

Calvin on matters relating to the president. A number of palace visitors, including the Ambassador, note that aside from security personnel Preval is most often remarkably alone in the expansive palace.

New Secretary General

15. (C) Preval announced in early August his appointment of former foreign minister and campaign and transition advisor Fritz Longchamps to the newly created position of secretary general of the presidency. Though the government has not yet published the decree formally establishing the position, the deputy secretary general, Raymond Genty, told post's pol specialist on August 31 that he and Longchamps had received notification of formal approval of their appointment by the cabinet and were prepared to begin work. The creation of the position follows recommendations from the UN Development Program to appoint a government official to coordinate presidential initiatives with the donor community. Longchamps, who was foreign minister during Preval's first term, had been one of Preval's key advisors during the campaign and transition period, and reportedly earlier turned down a position in the cabinet.

Call to Marc Bazin

16. (C) Former presidential candidate and perennial government official Marc Bazin informed Polcouns that Preval requested a meeting on August 24 and asked that Bazin help him form a "kitchen cabinet" for support and counsel. (Note: Bazin expressed concern that he would be asked to become governor of the central bank, a job he did not want, and was relieved that Preval had another task for him. Rumors about the central bank governor's imminent firing continue to circulate, and Gabriel Verret recently confirmed to Econoff that the GoH was unhappy with the director's performance. End Note.) Bazin and Preval discussed a group that included Bazin himself, former Jean Claude Duvalier-era ministers Jean Robert Estime and Frantz Lambert, and former Lavalas Minister of Interior Jocelerme Privert. (Comment. Recently released from jail on his own recognizance, Privert, along with former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and 26 other defendants, still await trial for their involvement in the alleged massacre of Aristide opponents in the town of La Scyrie prior to former President Aristide's resignation in February 2004. Polcouns expressed amazement to Bazin that Privert would be included in a kitchen cabinet, in light of Preval's exclusion of high-level Aristide supporters from the government. Bazin professed to be equally amazed, but explained that Preval had heard Privert, who is also a former director of the Haitian revenue service, recently expound on tax policy on the radio and was impressed with his presentation. End Comment.)

17. (C) At Preval's request, Bazin followed up their meeting with a written proposal outlining in much more detail the tasks to be performed by an expanded group of roughly 40 advisors divided among eight areas of public policy. Bazin's proposed advisors include current members of the government and an array of outside business and political figures. Tasks in Bazin's proposal include drafting policy white papers for the president, coordinating public outreach, and drafting the president's speeches. After presenting the proposal August 28, Bazin reported that Preval had called him the following day to tell him how pleased he was with Bazin's ideas, and that he had shared the proposal with Prime Minister Alexis, and that he would contact Bazin to follow-up shortly. Bazin had no further feedback as of September 6.

Comment

18. (C) Bazin is positively giddy at the prospect of re-entering the inner-circle of power without having to take a job that he regards as beneath him. Bazin's renewed enthusiasm aside, he offered useful insights into Preval's state of mind. Foremost, he asserted, is that Preval craves

informality and loathes structure. Consequently, Bazin summed up, Preval lacks the ability to "formulate, articulate, delegate and follow up." He recounted that during their initial meeting Bazin asked how he could help, only to have Preval counter by asking Bazin what help he thought Preval needed. Nonplused, Bazin suggested he start by naming a chief of staff, an idea which Preval was unenthusiastic about. Additionally, according to Bazin, Preval said that though he had all kinds of foreign advice from "Jeffrey Sachs, Chileans, and Argentines...foreigners don't understand Haiti. I need Haitians I can talk to."

Last -- and reflecting the Ambassador's most recent conversation with Preval that took place the following day (reftel) -- Preval seemed preoccupied with Aristide, asking Bazin for his advice. (Bazin suggested that Preval travel to South Africa to tell Aristide personally that the political situation was too delicate for his return. Preval responded that "the foreigners" would never stand for his visiting Aristide. This was, we trust, Preval's way of discounting a monumentally bad piece of advice from Bazin.)

19. (C) Comment continued. Prospects for any formalizing of Bazin's proposal appear questionable. It is hard to imagine that the small disparate group that Bazin and Preval discussed -- Estime and Lambert do not even reside in Haiti -- could be of additional use with the paucity of staff resources currently in the palace. Bazin's proposal for a larger group of advisors amounts to the formation of a parallel cabinet. Alexis is by many accounts already unhappy with the current short leash on which he finds himself (and the corresponding broad, undefined authority of Manuel). We doubt he would have much enthusiasm for setting up a structure that would further diminish his authority. Preval needs to expand the expertise available to him, and his appointment of Longchamps and outreach to Bazin are promising signals. It is equally important, however, that Preval create a staff structure and corresponding working relationships with the cabinet that allow him to develop policy, explain it to the public, and see to its implementation.

TIGHE